

AN ADDRESS

Robert Bridges

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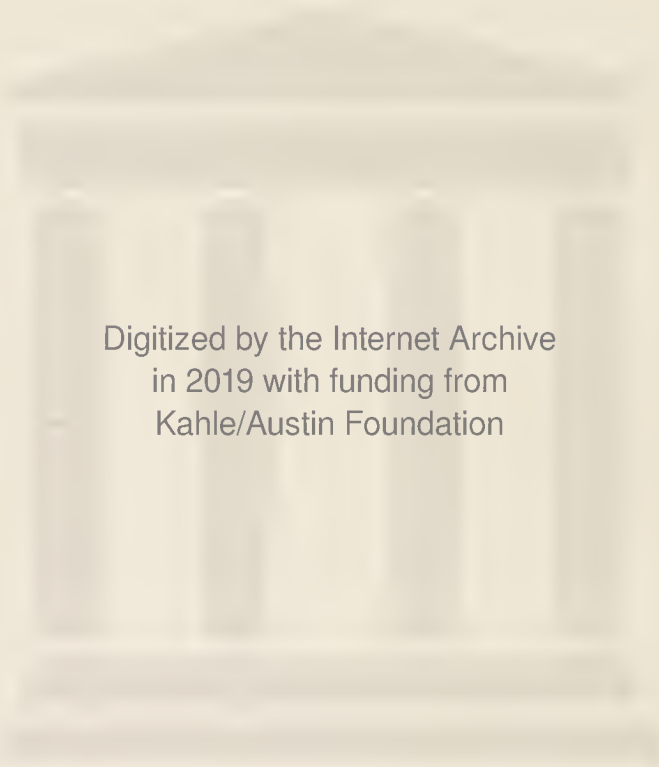
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A N
A D D R E S S
TO THE
Swindon Branch
OF THE
Workers' Educational Assⁿ.

Given on OCTOBER 28, 1916

by

ROBERT BRIDGES

POET LAUREATE

O X F O R D

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AN ADDRESS

MY visit to Swindon is due to Mr. Reuben George's invitation, and I must hold him responsible for any disappointment that may come of it ; but I am glad to meet and talk with you, less because I can hope to say anything that you do not know than because it is a time for friends to forgather and sympathize—and there are things that I feel disposed to say—without some such inclination my words could be of no account—nothing is of value which is not heartfelt and sincere.

I am going to speak of the matter which these meetings are held to promote, that is the improvement of the educational condition of the working classes ; and one is able to-day to take a different position from what would have been possible but a few years ago. For your society has won attention and respect : indeed I think that if its activities were to cease—if you were all to go to

sleep—yet legislation would proceed on favourable lines, so far is the nation now convinced of the necessity of reform in these things. And for me the war has changed the aspect of the question. I do not mean that I did not always sympathize with the cause now represented by the W.E.A. I mean this, that I never believed that in a large nation or empire a democratic government could be efficient and stable.

Put it in this way. Philosophers have from time to time drawn up ideal schemes of government based on the aim of greatest happiness, Utopias, as they are called ; but the word Utopia has come to mean a state of society presumably desirable, but only feasible if men were different from what they really are. What is usually depicted is a small State working harmoniously on a democratic or social basis ; and in small States the social basis can be worked, where home-life is simple, and external complications generally absent. Small village communities in a sort of patriarchal simplicity meet together to confer, the members are all personally known to one another, and they elect for their head and

representative a man whom they have known personally all their lives. These representatives are gathered into wider councils, and in this way the common interests are easily and honestly concentrated. But in larger States these essential simplicities do not exist—and the small numbers are essential; for, as the numbers increase the separate members necessarily lose their mutual personal relationship; and, as they cannot know their representative personally, they elect some plausible fellow, the man who flatters them most, or promises them the most immediate advantages. Such leaders are typically men of some oratorical power, who profess politics for the love of self-importance, or for private gain; and when such men meet in a national parliament there is neither honesty nor wisdom in their counsels.

Let me remind you that Athens—that famous example of successful democracy—was not a real democracy. It was served by a slave population: and that, you know, avoids the main difficulty of allowing the vote of the majority to rule—because the slave-workers had no vote. We have

modern examples. The United States is an example of an honest and well-considered attempt at democracy on a large scale. Its isolation from the Old World and the wide territories that were at its disposal allowed it an exceptional term of prosperity ; but its present condition is not such as to convert me. And we can look nearer home : our own democracy : our Parliament in those years before the war broke out : it was a spectacle to justify all the patriotic fear that reasonable people felt. I will spare you the picture. Enough to say that the Prussian statesmen, who were observing us with jealous attention, thought that it was impossible that we could pull ourselves together ; so they set off on the warpath. And they are still exhibiting to us the very superior organization of an autocracy.

But the unexpected happened. The British democracy slowly, slowly, slowly awoke to the situation. I confess that I did not expect this ; much as I hoped for it. I did not think that the working-men of England would perceive that the strife was between democracy and militarism ; that, if Prussia won, then the hope of democracy

was crushed for ever. Ever is hardly too big a word. The situation now is that you have gone in determined to win; and it lies with you to be faithful to the end, and to see perhaps more clearly than you yet do, that you must sacrifice all else, all present considerations, to the one purpose of a victory that shall deliver the earth from terrorism, tyranny, and slavery.

Now you who are met here to-day not only know all this, but you have also come to be convinced that an uneducated democracy can never be stable. Education is necessary for strength and stability, and some of you at least have a wholesome appetite for the requisite food. And since you cannot get your education without leisure, and cannot have leisure without some easement of the conditions of labour, and this reform involves legislation, you claim such legislation. If our democracy is to be stable, such legislation is imperative. Here I am with you all along: and it is of this education that I shall speak—not of politics nor of war.

I remember that when I first learned Greek at

school I was much perplexed by finding that the word school was a Greek word meaning leisure. With me school was work, but leisure meant play. I was quite unable to solve this riddle ; and with children school must always mean work. The Greeks did not, of course, neglect primary teaching, but they had no system of State schools and compulsory education, as we have. Slaves (whom they called pedagogues) accompanied the boys to private schools, where they continued their nursery education in the rudiments, and were kept out of mischief. And we may for our purpose consider all merely elementary education as a continuation of the nursery, and suppose that education proper begins when a boy is able and willing to think for himself. The transition from the time when the child thinks all instruction troublesome, to the time when the young man considers his mental development and the gaining of knowledge to be his chief interest in life, is gradual and uncertain ; but the two different attitudes of mind justify the separation of the two periods.

Here, in Swindon, the Greek notion that

leisure is school, that is the opportunity and time for real education, will exactly fit. And it implies the best meaning of the word education ; it also explains why leisure is so highly esteemed.

Rousseau—who had a good heart and philanthropic intentions—considered, as you know, that *primaeval* society was a blissful and golden age, when every one was contented and happy. He thought that the simplest conditions of life were the best, and he draws a very attractive picture of a community in Switzerland who lived as he approved, occupying all their leisure in the arts. ‘Most delightful to see (he says) and probably unique on the earth. A whole mountain covered with dwelling-houses, of which each one was the centre of a plot of ground that belonged to it, so disposed that the equal distances between the houses showed the moderation and equality of the properties, which gave the numerous inhabitants of these comfortable homes the conveniences of mutual intercourse. These happy peasants, who lived at their ease, free from taxes and imposts, cultivated their lands with all possible care and skill, and lived on the natural produce ;

while they employed their leisure hours in a thousand manual industries, so as to put to profit the inventive genius which nature had bestowed upon them. In winter especially, when the deep snow interrupted their easy intercommunication, every householder shut himself and his numerous family within his well-warmed house of wood, built by his own labour, where they occupied themselves in all manner of useful handicraft, a perpetual employment that gave interest to their lives, and secured them many comforts through their earnings. Never did any professional upholsterer, smith, or plumber visit their canton ; there was no trade that they could not themselves ply, nor was there a bit of furniture in the home that was not the work of their own hands. Among many industries they specially brought watch-making to perfection, and some of their produce was sold even in the shops of Paris.' Then he tells us how they had plenty of books ; all knew something of drawing or painting, or mathematics. Most of them played on some musical instrument ; and their instruction in these things was traditional and mutual. One

of their most frequent amusements was to sing with their wives and children the old four-part Genevan psalms; and from these farm-buildings you might hear on a Sabbath evening the learned and solemn counterpoint of Goudimel echoing far over the hill-side.

This picture of the Swiss canton is a picture of country life; and that under very special conditions. It may serve us to draw the distinction between town and country life with their special advantages and disadvantages.

In the country the chief disadvantages are that the labour is longer and more incessant, and the wages low. There are no holidays, no days off. On Sundays, even, though some of the workmen go free with the horses, yet the horses and all the beasts must be fed and seen to, the cattle milked, and the dairy attended. And then the villagers that make the society are, in England at least, of exclusive habits, and seldom combine in anything like social life; in the absence of which an atmosphere of stagnation and dreariness prevails, that drives the livelier young spirits away to seek to better themselves, and their leaving the

place does not improve the situation. In many places the standard of work falls almost below the level of the wages. Nothing more amazes our active colonials than to see three or four men occupied at a piece of work that any one of themselves would have handled singly.

On the other hand, the countryman who loves his home is in some respects better off than any townsman can be ; for of all the pleasures of life the mere pleasure of healthy living is the only true foundation ; and above all that we eat and drink, fresh air is the first necessary food. A man may well say that he would exchange nothing for these. Before we leave it, let us make out the best case for Rousseau's simple life ; for the man who from sunrise to sunset is with nature, who witnesses and waits on all the variations of the seasons, and sees the natural beauty of the earth as God made it, and is engaged on the most indispensable of all human industries. And let any one ask himself where at any moment he would most wish to be : would it be in this lecture-room, or in a theatre or a museum or music-hall, or in a hot stuffy crowd in front of the ' movies ' ?

Would he not rather fancy himself stretched at full length on some high down, with the fresh breeze rustling in the grasses, the larks singing overhead, and the white clouds of June sailing across the sky? Or perhaps on a river-bank, where the willows droop over the water-lilies—or in a wood at any season of the year, where among the noble trees all kinds of life and of beauty are busy in perpetual change and infinite variety? And so those who have seen most of the world and have worked hardest will seek out for their last days the quietest spot of country that they can find, as the most agreeable to the soul.

And what does an immigrant from the country to the town actually find? Well, he finds his shorter hours of labour, his higher wages, and abundant cheap amusement and distraction, also a livelier society. But he also finds the housing crowded, repulsive, and expensive; little or no spiritual provision that offers any charm or elevation; but rather distractions of the most vulgar and degrading character.

Rousseau (to return to him) was, as you know, not very moderate in his opinions; and con-

cerning amusements he held that all amusement was bad. He thought the only use of it was to keep idle people out of mischief. A good conscience, he says, kills the taste for frivolity. It was, so he thought, discontent with self, the burden of ignorance and effeteness, the boredom of life, the lack or loss of simple and natural tastes and emotions that made amusements necessary. Now this is too severe and stern a view; but there is too much truth in it for us to dismiss it altogether; indeed, it would seem altogether justified by experience of the diversions and relaxations provided for the people in our towns. These are, as Rousseau would have pointed out, wholly bad, both in themselves and in their effects. The self-seeking purveyors of cheap amusement are men incapable of better things. They are unprincipled money-makers whose aim is to collect the pence of the wage-earners. They go the shortest way to work by appealing to the universal animal emotions that are easiest to excite; as may be seen in the Cinema-films supplied to us from Germany and America.

Now it happens that this trifling with the

emotions is the most soul-destroying habit that can be indulged ; yet if the market is so fully supplied it is because there is a demand, and the average uneducated man likes to have his newspaper full of murders and divorce-cases and bad jokes, and loves to sit in front of a spectacle that pricks him with horror or tickles him to foolish laughter.—No sane philosopher would wish such men to have any voice in national politics.

This state of things is due to uncontrolled competition : competition for money. The reason why the housing is so dirty and costly is that the mean dingy streets have been run up by a speculating builder who only wanted interest for his money. And the reason why this poison-tree has been allowed to grow is that the Liberal statesmen in the reign of Queen Victoria were agreed that the way to promote national prosperity and general happiness was to allow every man to do as he liked—blind to the fact that this prevented any one from living as he ought, whether he wished it or no. But they believed in their doctrine.

The cure of all this is difficult enough. Our

hope is to know what it is that we want, and to demand it. What then is education ?

To educate means to draw out, and if we are to seek to draw out the human mind we must first have some clear notion as to what the mind is like, of what sort those faculties are which are both the object and means of education.

Suppose some one should tell us that education is the development and exercise of human Reason.

Now Reason is the intellectual faculty, which distinguishes man from the brutes, and, so far as we know, man is the only form of life in which conscious Reason exists—for the rudiments of it which we find in some animals are negligible. It is the intellectual quality which has conquered material obstacles and raised man from a state of savagery to his present condition. It judges itself to be the unique agent of all his knowledge and attainment, and being not only his highest mental power but the consciousness of it, he is perhaps almost incapable of imagining anything higher. Thus Aristotle, in his definition of God as the eternal mind and first cause of all, supposes

the Mind of God, though incomparably more perfect, to be of the same nature as the Reason of man. I could not myself assent to this assumption. But let that pass. We may readily admit that Reason is man's highest intellectual faculty. Let us ask Reason to tell us something about the other faculties of the mind.

We must remember that Reason is the only tool that we have to work with, and that a tool cannot work on itself. Temper and sharpen it as you may, your chisel cannot cut itself. We should therefore not expect too much.

Now, first of all, our Reason is distinguished by being a conscious process : for example, I know at this moment what I am driving at, and you consciously take cognizance of my statements ; and we are agreed that animals cannot do this sort of thing. But though they lack our logical Reason, we see that they have some other kind of mental activity whereby they are able to act rightly, with an ingenuity that often baffles our conscious skill, and a method which escapes our Reason to unravel. One or two examples will suffice. In the insect world it is not uncommon

to find that an insect which has but a few weeks of life will lay hundreds of eggs—of the nature and purpose of which it can have absolutely no reasonable knowledge—yet it will spend the chief part of its short life in the careful disposal of these eggs in the manner best calculated to ensure their survival, and thereby the continuation of the species—concerning all which again it can know nothing ; nor could all our Reason inform it. Again, I have read of the horse, that on the wide American prairies a horse-dealer will often make a circuit of a hundred miles or more, visiting the farms and settlements, and buying at each what beasts he may. If, in any part of his round, a horse escapes from his drove, it will return in a straight line to its native homestead. It does not retrace its steps, but takes a bee-line, as it is called, from the spot where it escapes to the spot whence it was taken.

Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely. It does not matter which you may choose : they are all alike in principle. They are often called ‘ the marvels of Instinct ’, by which is implied that we wonder at them, because we cannot under-

stand them. But if they are the rule, and they are the rule in animal behaviour, there must be something wrong in our way of thinking if we find ourselves wondering at them as strange. I do not forbid myself to marvel: I mean that a theory of mind is self-condemned if it has to treat as an exception what it finds to be a rule.

It is plain that there is a sort of mind which is not our logical Reason, but which performs purposive actions without conscience of their purpose; or if it have conscience of a purpose (as we may suppose the homing horse to have), yet it accomplishes that purpose without knowing how.

Whether mankind when in a savage state ever possessed very much of this sort of instinctive faculty we cannot tell. It is certain that we now perform by the aid of logical Reason and deliberation most of those purposive acts which animals perform without reasoning; but we have too much in common with the lower animals to suppose that we can be lacking in the whole sphere of that unconscious faculty so universally possessed by them. And it has never been questioned that we share with them the great funda-

mental Instincts (self-preservation, and so on)—these are present in children and adults. What I wish to make clear is that beside these universal primal Instincts (which are the motive power of all animal life) we have a vast unconscious Mind that is always active, and a much vaster personal experience than our conscious Reason can pretend to.

A simple consideration will explain what I mean. If I walk down the street with my mind busily engaged and absorbed in some remote train of thought, I observe nothing (though automatically I guide my steps none the worse for that); but afterwards, when I am aroused from my abstraction, I may remember to have seen certain persons or things on my way. The longer my abstraction continues, the less I recall: but that I consciously remember anything which I did not consciously observe at the time, shows that experience was unconsciously recorded; and much that I never remember, and never shall remember, was likewise recorded. It is even probable, with some of us at least, that when we peruse a column of the newspaper, our eyes may

receive impressions from the neighbouring columns, and convey to the mind, through the brain, information concerning wholly unrelated matters ; although the Conscience (I mean the conscious Reason) takes no note of them. They enter the mind unperceived ; and this sort of unconscious experience is always going on.

We have no conscious memory of this unconscious experience. Any experience which we observed and were conscious of at the time, we are able, more or less, to recall at will and reason upon. But our will has no power of recalling those other items of personal knowledge that have been unconsciously absorbed. But they are not for that dead or inactive. They are absorbed and organized. So that a man holds, hidden away from his memory, a vaster wealth of knowledge than he is aware of, or can draw on at pleasure.

One might map out the strata of the mind in a sort of spatial diagram of three layers, the deepest being the inherited animal Instincts ; the uppermost the conscious Intellect or Reason ; and between these two would lie the region of

unconscious personal knowledge acquired during life ; the greater part of which is entirely unconscious, while the upper part of it would be mixed up with the memories of conscious experience. This dim middle place is the magazine of our common sense ; it is the garden where our ideals grow, and its spontaneous fruiting is genius.

We must not be deceived by the simplicity of such a diagram. Its use is to give definition to the vague terms that we are driven to use in talking of the functions of the Mind. And I think it is of no use to talk of the Mind and of its education unless we recognize how large and trustworthy a portion of it lies in this intermediate state between the animal Instincts and the conscious Reason.

Orthodox philosophy dislikes, and even repudiates, the term subconscious Mind, or unconscious Mind. It urges that the word Mind presupposes self-consciousness. But think what really happens, and how it is unconsciously and not consciously that each man's Mind grows to be what it is. A man is born with certain

feelings and likings—and it is in this respect that men most differ—and as they grow up in what is called their environment, their bias and special predispositions unconsciously select and organize their experiences to feed and develop their special liking ; each man differently, as we may see in our children, how one child with a musical turn will observe sounds, another with a mechanical turn will be delighted by taking a clock to pieces, while a born painter will be unhappy without a box of colours. These inborn feelings and likings are—together with the great primal Instincts and Passions—the motive power of all our conduct, and they lie like an engine-room hidden away in the basement. And moral philosophers explain that the Reason is set over them to regulate them : its chief function in this respect being to observe and govern. All will agree : for example, Love and Hatred are motive inborn forces ; Reason approves Love but disapproves of Hatred as a working principle, and keeps it under.

Art and Morals were not invented by Reason. They come to life and are nourished in this

middle section. Every man is born with a 'desire of Beauty' or of 'Good' in some degree and in some kind, and he instinctively feeds that desire or liking on what is agreeable to it. He selects. Consider any object presented to the senses, how various and almost infinite its qualities are, and how impossible it is for any man, even the most trained observer, to perceive them all. Each will first perceive those qualities that are most nearly related to him and that appeal to his liking. And in this way he feeds his own strength, and develops his native faculty. And this unconsciously growing self gradually comes to observe itself, becomes conscious, and takes Reason for its guide.

The purpose of education is to draw out or educate this inborn love of Beauty. And if any of you doubt whether there is such a thing, I do not think that it matters what you call it, if you admit (what you cannot deny) that you have a desire, and that that desire is for something 'better' or 'good'. That desire—whatever you may call it—the Greeks called the Desire of Beauty or the Desire of Good; and you will

find it difficult to get behind that, or to substitute anything for it. It is what has brought you here this afternoon ; it is what is making me talk to you. And it is the basis of our Religion.

If now we are so far agreed, and ask our good lady Reason—whom we must not forget to thank for her previous instruction in the rudiments—how she proposes to educate our desire for good, might she not tell us that there are three things that she can do ? (1) To feed our native faculty on a generous diet of wholesome food, and that is OPPORTUNITY OF ENVIRONMENT. (2) To instruct us as to the qualities and effects of the various kinds of ‘ Goods ’, or things that men desire, and that is VALUES OR WISDOM. (3) To inform us of the actual attainment to which men (like ourselves) have already arrived, so that we may profit by their experience, and that is KNOWLEDGE OR SCIENCE.

This last head, Science and Knowledge, is the especial field of Reason, where she rules absolutely; and if we may now pass it over lightly, that is not because it is a small matter, but rather

because its necessity is so universal and commonly esteemed. The chief educative work of scientific Reason is sometimes called 'handing on the torch'—a metaphor from an old Greek game, in which a torch was handed on from one runner to another until the last won the race, against another string of competitors, by arriving first at the goal with his torch still burning. Thus a school of teachers is imagined to hand on the torch of Knowledge from one generation to another: and without tradition progress would be impossible.

But what I have called OPPORTUNITY or ENVIRONMENT is much neglected, and there is no reform from which you have more to gain than that which would secure you a generous and wholesome spiritual diet. The soul requires food just as the body does; all its faculties, even our moral virtues, may in this be likened to our muscular efficiency, the strength and co-ordination of which come of its exercise and practice; and we must have objects to practise on. The task is how to provide them. And seeing the mental and spiritual destitution of our towns we

almost despair. How can people be fed in the desert? How give them drink when all the wells are poisoned? Well, it is not quite so bad as that. There are existing activities which may serve as nucleuses : museums, reading rooms, art galleries, orchestras, choral and other societies. But our main hope must lie in the sound maxim that ' Demand creates supply '. If we organize our demand there may be an unexpected response, and out of the most unpromising community there may flock to you many who were only waiting to be called.

But you must organize your demand. And if I were to suggest a first step it would be the institution of Hostels or Colleges for the younger unmarried workmen, where they might lodge and club together in groups of thirty or forty, and, with the service of a few attendants, enjoy all the comforts and advantages of collegiate life, such as the more leisured classes now find in our old universities. I imagine these young workmen having private bedrooms or cubicles, with bathrooms and central heating, with a common-room for meals, which would serve as a lecture hall ;

while there would be three or four rooms of moderate size for study or lesser classes. Before such hostels could be specially built, it would be generally easy to rent and adapt some solid old-fashioned town-house, or to combine two or three contiguous small houses. The young men would thus be removed from the distracting and vulgar contagion of the town, and without any personal trouble be assured of economical and good food and lodging, with more comforts than they could otherwise command—indeed they would be as well accommodated as men can be. Their mutual association would keep their interests alive, they would acquire the manners of good fellowship, and be withheld by social attractions from the too early renunciation of boyhood for married life—in which, I think, they are better fitted to engage at thirty than at twenty. Moreover in education it is profitable to prolong the youthful temper and habit. In large working centres there would be several of these hostels, and the more numerous these young student-workers were, the more easily would they command the

teachers and opportunities that they need. The schools that would develop at such centres would furnish the elder married men with every facility, without interfering with their home-life : and their attendance at the classes and meetings is a necessary part of the scheme. There are details in such a college-life which you could fill in better than I—these would vary with the fixed time-table of the working-day. But when work is over, surely we could draw a picture to out-rival Rousseau's Swiss canton ! For when they come home, our young men, after they have bathed themselves and are conveniently clad, will meet to eat their supper in that social hilarity which a youthful company always provides, and which our gravest physiologists now understand to be a pleasure needful to promote healthy nutrition. And when supper is ended, they will not, like Rousseau's peasants, sit down afresh to manual labour, making Noah's arks and clocks and mending chairs, but will be free to indulge in every kind of mental pastime. I see some of them with their violins going off to the orchestra, others bound for the museum

or art-galleries, others meeting their teachers in classes, or sitting down to private study, acquainting themselves with the thought of the world, or thronging to a lecture or debate in the hall. And on holidays—I think you know here in Swindon what an excursion into the country means. I know, loving the country and living in it as I do, that I never enjoyed it more than when I escaped to it from work in London. And if Nature can give us high rapture and ecstasy, then those for whom it preserves unfaded the freshness of its charm are better off than they to whom it is dulled by unbroken familiarity. I believe that that Swiss canton had more charm for Rousseau than it had for its inhabitants.

Now this provision of OPPORTUNITIES—the enriching of your ENVIRONMENT—I take to be the most ‘material’ part of your educational reform, since without acquaintance with the things themselves a man cannot judge of their VALUES. And the whole business of education is to lead your inborn Desire for the Good on its natural path, whereby it comes to recognize the

true Good and Beautiful, and the superiority of spiritual things over material.

The language of the great teachers and masters of wisdom sounds strange indeed to one who has not made the first steps. It speaks from a height to which few attain, and of a height beyond, towards which the teacher is himself still striving. Hear Plato : ‘ When a man proceeding onwards from terrestrial things by the way of right-loving, once comes into sight of that beauty, he is not far from his goal. And this is the right way wherein he should go or be guided in his love. He should begin by loving earthly things for the sake of absolute loveliness, ascending to that as it were by degrees or steps, from the first to the second, and thence to all fair forms ; and from fair forms to fair conduct ; and from fair conduct to fair principles, until from fair principles he finally arrives at the ultimate principle of all, and learns what absolute beauty is. This life, if any life at all is worth living, is the life that a man should live.’

The right choosing and using of goods is WISDOM. ‘ Wisdom is the principal thing, there-

fore get Wisdom, and with all thou hast gotten get understanding.' That is the Bible, not Plato—and so on the day when the Church commemorates the mystery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, as typified in the old Apostolic vision of the fiery tongues, the prayer is for that gift of the Spirit, *a right judgement in all things*.

And there is a bad education. If learning to read should only kindle a taste for vulgar newspapers and exciting fiction, and lead a man's mind astray into shallow philosophies and materialistic views of life, which feed his baser passions and make disturbance and discontent in his soul, then education is a bad thing for him. Better have none.

I knew an old countryman who had worked hard all his life in devoted service to one master whom he had attended as a child; and when (owing to the democratic neglect of agriculture) the farming estate was impoverished, sold and degraded into a pleasure-park, this man was dismissed from his service and turned out of his cottage by the new landlord, a rich upstart from

London. Crippled by his long labours, he spent his last lonely days in a poor way, as his little savings allowed, robbed of all the comforts which his industry had gathered round his old home. For his long life of hard duty and inadequate recompense you would all of you style him a slave ; yet, though fully aware of the injustice of his lot, I have never seen a more truly contented man. And the secret of his happiness was that he had kept his soul clean. Education might have widened his outlook, but it could scarcely have bettered his nobility and happiness. As he could read I once asked him why I never found him with a book. He replied that he read sometimes in the gospel, but if he ever took up a newspaper or a chance book he always came upon something that he wished he had not seen. I loved chatting with him, for his simple talk was full of philosophy. In thought and manners he was a spiritual man and a gentleman ; superior in both to the rich educated man who had thoughtlessly wronged him.

And if a man proceed onwards from earthly

things by the way of wrong-loving, he may descend as it were by steps or degrees from ugly forms to ugly conduct, and from ugly conduct to ugly principles, until he finally arrives at the ultimate principle of all and learns what absolute ugliness is. And that is VULGARITY.

Vulgarity—that is our national blemish and sin. And if I had begun my talk with it I should not have got very far yet. It is blindness to Values ; it is spiritual death. It pervades all classes : but the middle classes are the most deeply infected, and they stand as a dense barrier between you and the higher education. It is seen outwardly in their manner of life, their petty class distinctions, and uneasy pretensions to be just a little better off than they are ; the waste of their money in aping art and luxury, by which they only make themselves ridiculous and more uncomfortable ; their incapacity to see that simplicity, honesty, and thrift are fair and good, while their pitiful ambitions and restless affectations are contemptible. I hope that all *pretension* is as shocking to you as it must be familiar. May God grant

that our present sorrows and trials and the searching of our hearts may force on us a spiritual distinction of the true Values of life, and that the stubborn necessities of thrift may compel us to see the sin of self-indulgence and the graces of simplicity. Remember how it is because we have set our Rights so much above our Duties that we are now harrowed by this awful excess of Duty ; and that it is at the feet of the idol of our old self-seeking that our dearest are devotedly sacrificing their young lives.

I must come to an end. And you may be questioning whether this account of man's mind, as something well-disposed and striving after good, is not irreconcilable with the phenomena of the war. Does it not look as if that were rather true which one great school of thinkers has asserted, that man is by nature bad, and is only preserved from an anarchy of evil by strong repression, and that it is the duty of those who have attained to the knowledge of good to devote all their wits to keeping the world in order by force, or whatever ingenuity of government they can contrive ? Well, if you believe that you may

give up all hopes of democracy. But we may confirm our better belief by remembering first that the German people are deceived, and that the powerful machinery of a clever autocracy has been used to stimulate their bad passions. Their folk are by nature both rude of heart and easily led ; and they honestly believed the lie, when they were told they were being invaded, and that fear was fanned to stimulate their hatred, in order to make them fight desperately. The worst part of the affair was the connivance of their teachers in the plot ; for that would seem to discredit education. But again we must remember that those professors of wisdom and religion are not free ; they are paid agents of the Government, and if they ventured to speak the truth, would be clapped into prison. Their irretrievable and abject dishonour claims the deepest pity. From such methodical militarism and tyranny the worst should be expected ; and all this has grown up under or alongside of a sceptical philosophy which impugns the bases of human knowledge.

It is no time to discuss a man's moral principles

when he is trying to kill you. If the Germans have apostatized from Christianity, let that invite us to look to our own Faith, and to drive vulgarity from our Religion, which it has nearly destroyed. That is a task indeed : ‘ To build again Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land.’ That is the work of Faith ; and since we are asking Reason to guide us in the path of our spiritual desire, let me remind you that Faith is mainly the belief in God, and that the existence of God is not demonstrable by logic. It lies beyond. But Reason will approve of a truth that she could not discover, nor can we wholly dissociate Reason from Instinct. Even as when we deem ourselves only to be reasoning, we yet rely on unapparent intuitions and unaccountable axioms, so when against apparent Reason we prefer a strong native assurance, it is Reason that weighs the value of that assurance ; and our best Faith is just this reasonable trust of our deeper nature and better desires ; to doubt which were destructive of any human ideal, and of Reason itself. The truth which concerns Faith is whatever man goes darkly striving after in spite of

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mortal hindrance and doubt, as he slowly rises in his desire for better and better things, so that our true Faith will neither stickle for formularies, nor renounce mysteries. The idea of God grows with our spiritual growth, and Faith is exactly as that oration to the Hebrews styles it, *the substance* or reality *of things hoped for*, which are ever our newest desire, not our past dream—and the Desire itself is our only assurance and *evidence of those unseen things*.

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